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House of Representatives

HON. STEVE ISRAEL
OF NEW YORK

Mr. Speaker, I am a new member of the Committee on Armed Services and am very proud to be serving on that committee under the able leadership of the gentleman from California (Chairman Hunter) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton), the Ranking Member.

Mr. Speaker, last month I visited the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center in Amityville, New York, to bid farewell and Godspeed to the Alpha Company of the 6th Communication Battalion. They went willingly; they sacrifice selflessly; they serve proudly. I remember their faces; I remember their families' faces.

Our Nation owes them the legislation before us today, but we owe them much more than that. We must stand with them. We need to protect their jobs, protect their incomes, protect their homes, provide health care for their families while they are away, and just as important, after they return.

We cannot ask men and women who fight for our freedom abroad to fight for their veterans benefits when they return home. We cannot balance the domestic budgets on the backs of those who are willing to fight on our fronts. We have a covenant with these patriots. We have a moral contract with these soldiers. We have a national commitment to these hundreds of thousands of faceless heroes and their families. So as we stand here united in praise of our troops, let us never forget the sustained and long-term obligation we have to our regular Armed Forces, our activated Reserves and our veterans.

They are there for us, and we must be there for them. They are the ones who truly and bravely answer the philosopher's charge: "Freedom must be reinvented in every generation." God bless them. God bless America.